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RAILWAYS ARE ELECTRIFYING



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the ASLEF Journal

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ONLY ACTIVE BRANCHES DELIVER EFFICIENT TRADE UNIONS



I MIGHT sound as if I'm talking down my job – but it is a fact that trade unions are only efficient when they are well organised at local and branch level. If we didn't have active and enthusiastic local reps and branch secretaries, ASLEF would be nothing.

I was thinking about this because of the clumsy attempts of some renegades who recently tried to set up another rail union because they had lost positions within their own. It struck me that these people know nothing about unions, or they would not bother. They gave each other titles like 'general secretary' and 'organiser' – but without activists all they have is titles. They pretend to be emperors – but I'm afraid they're not wearing trousers! It's an unpleasant image, I know ...

Trade union organisation is based on its foundations. Quite rightly, this is where power lies and where democracy is based. The demands and aspirations of our members are reflected up the union structure, and acted upon by the national executive. The members tell the general secretary what to do, not the other way round. Unless there is this flow of information, I cannot do my job.

Let me give you an example, remarkable because it is infrequent. Last month we sent out a survey on train companies' policies on trauma support, especially after a fatal incident. Normally most company councils send us a report in good time. Last month it didn't happen – we only had responses from Gatwick Express and Trans Pennine Express. It means we are less confident about what we should be seeking. I'm not seeking to criticise or to blame, and I know the period before our AAD is unusually hectic – but I think it does illustrate my point. Without our activists, we are a hollow organisation.

I'd like to take this opportunity to remind freight members about the independent study into shift work and fatigue commissioned by the Rail Safety and Standards Board (RSSB) and backed by ASLEF. Later this month all freight drivers will be asked to complete a questionnaire and keep a diary on the issue. I hope you'll all do it. The information will be vital in determining future shift patterns with the benefit of expert opinion – yours.

As it left the Annual Assembly of Delegates, the executive carried away a host of demands and ambitions to work on. But passing resolutions and giving the national leadership instructions is only the beginning. We will be successful only if those same delegates now work with other activists to involve the entire membership in support of the EC's initiatives.

KEITH NORMAN
GENERAL SECRETARY

Union celebrates Kelly ruling out monster trucks

FOLLOWING a two-year campaign in which ASLEF has played a leading role, transport minister Ruth Kelly has rejected proposals to introduce Longer and Heavier Vehicles (LHVs) onto UK roads. Over this period the union has argued against 'monster trucks' with government, briefed ASLEF MPs, lobbied opinion formers, formed alliances, commissioned opinion polls, produced leaflets and written articles – and finally we have secured the outcome we worked for.

Keith Norman said he was 'understandably delighted' that the government has made this important decision. 'It offers a real boost to our Freight on Rail campaign, it prevents our roads becoming more dangerous and congested and it is an important move as far as the environment is concerned,' he said.

The Department for Transport (DfT) announced last month that the independent report it commissioned from the Transport Research Laboratory (TRL) has highlighted several issues making the use of LHVs in the UK 'impractical, either on a permanent or trial basis'.

The government believes LHVs would lead to an increase in CO2 emissions and Ruth



Kelly said the study showed that 'super-lorries are not compatible with British roads'.

'I hope this has paved the way for the EU to take a similar sensible decision,' Keith added. 'We have all been frustrated at the delay in coming to the decision because we believe our arguments have been both logical and reasonable.' The department recognised uncertainties about how efficiently such vehicles could be used, particularly when sourcing loads of sufficient size to make return journeys sustainable; and about their

impacts on the viability of existing rail freight services and the potential for future growth.

The only down-side is that the DfT says it intends to still consider 'modest increases' in the length of current articulated vehicles.

'Banning LHVs is good news for all our freight members,' Keith says. 'It is also encouraging for the union to have such success with our campaigns, and underlines the benefits of having a political fund which enables us to properly resource political initiatives.'

SCOTTISH PUBLIC COUGH UP £193,000 FOR FRANCHISE ADVICE

The kindly Scottish taxpayer has forked out £192,908 to consultants Ernst and Young LLP and Brodies LLP for their 'advice' about the Scotrail franchise.

The Scottish government recently decided to extend Scotrail's franchise by a further 5 years. It was supposed to run out in 2011. The SNP government has extended it to 2014. The union was not alone in asking why the franchise was extended at this stage – three years before it was due to expire.

It emerged that Scottish transport minister Stewart Stevenson paid the consultants £192,908 for this inexplicable advice when he was challenged by Karen Whitefield, the Labour MSP for Airdrie and Shotts.

'This is an appalling waste of public money,' insists ASLEF's Scottish officer Kevin Lindsay. 'Could this not have been better spend on – for example – improving railways?'

SQUASH INTO GATWICK

Stephen Biggs, the secretary of the Gatwick Express Company Council, reports that the Class 460 UMU fleet used at the Gatwick branch are fitted with air conditioning but, he says, there are still issues with the adjustable Chapman seats and the exterior car door droplight windows.

Drivers have experienced back problems possibly due to the limited adjustments of the driving seat. There are also complaints about the droplight windows which are badly maintained so it can be difficult to open and close or vibrate and rattle when the rubber seals are removed to alleviate the resistance which causes excessive wind noise.

There is also a Class 73/2 loco based at Battersea Stewarts Land depot. It has no air cooling, partially adjustable seat and it is not routinely cleaned. The coupling adapters and technicians equipment are left on the cab floor, which creates a trip hazard.

All these matters continue to be pursued by the union.



MOTHERWELL branch members Jim Lafferty (Branch Chairman) George Adamson (RMS) Andy Jones (Branch Secretary) and Jim Baxter (Trades Council Chairman) attended the unveiling of Memorial Gates at Summerlee Heritage Centre Coatbridge last month. The gates are in memory of all workers killed at work reports George Adamson.

SIMPLER FARES – FOR A MINUTE!

ATOC wrote to the general secretary to tell him about its intention to simplify train fares. The changes, the letter said would bring tickets into 'just three ticket types – Advance, Anytime and Off-Peak'.

Excellent news! But what's this in the next paragraph? 'In some areas even cheaper Super Off-Peak fares will be available'.

Oh no! Here we go again....!!

IN THE BLACK – IT'S OFFICIAL!

Nigel Gooch from Hard Dowdy, the union's auditors, told last month's AAD, 'I am very pleased to tell you that overall the accounts for 2007 show a great improvement and the funds generated have increased the society's wealth by over 35%'.



Alan Donnelly, vice-President Tosh McDonald, conference vice-chair Dave Plumb and general secretary Keith Norman. Conference photographs: John Birdsall



President Alan spells out ASLEF's successes and ambitions

In his normal robust and straightforward manner, Alan Donnelly touched on all aspects of the union's work as he summarized what ASLEF has achieved over the past year, and spelled out what he hoped for the future. These are some of the key points of the EC President's vision

ALAN was delighted to see the union's finances back in the black much sooner than he had anticipated and he was anxious to attribute that to efforts made at every level of the union. 'It means that we can have a new and more positive outlook. We are now truly in a position to represent, concentrate on and deliver for our membership,' he said.

CURRENT CHALLENGES

He gave a brief update on some immediate challenges facing the union, including difficulties with Trans Pennine before dwelling for a moment on criticism the EC faced over accepting a 5.1% pay deal with Arriva Trains Wales. Alan also defended agreeing to rest day working with Freightliner Heavy Haul 'so that we could control the situation, monitor it and ensure that people were treated the same'.

He praising the EWS company council for 'moving work around' so that redundancy was no longer on the cards. Currently the union has a 'no compulsory redundancy' agreement with EWS, secured by agreeing to rest day working.

The union had dealt with difficulties about the treatment of reps with Arriva Cross County

but, although a solution had been found, he remained angry about the treatment of a 63 year old driver threatened with dismissal over a 'safety on the line' incident. 'To management, we are just little cogs that make the cash flow,' he declared.

UNION CAMPAIGNS

Alan first touched on the union securing recognition at Croydon trams (see page 8) and pledged to keep up the campaign to secure the same at Manchester Metrolink. He recounted a rather intimidating meeting with Unite, who were furious that ASLEF got recognition at Croydon. 'We are here to represent our members and deliver as much as we can for them,' Alan said. 'Our members on Croydon Tramlink deserve our respect and representation as well as all the benefits that ASLEF members enjoy - because they are train drivers.' Before moving on he also referred to the parts played by Mick Whelan and Dave Calfe in gaining recognition at Serco.

Alan pledged that the union would continue to argue for reasonable and positive policies over Specially Monitored Drivers - and conceded that progress had been 'criminally slow'. Literally - as the Bob Morgan case showed. 'Under the SMD policies we seek, Bob

would never have been imprisoned. It is all part of a blame culture.'

He was pleased with the progress made on the 'freight to rail' campaign and said he sensed that ASLEF once again had the respect of government ministers and MPs. 'Ministers now invite us to talks on cab design - the result of our SQUASH campaign. We are being consulted on new traction, and they have recognized the need for a Rail Forum that would be 'neither a talking shop or a bleating shop'. The Forum will involve all the trade unions and the owners - something I think is a great step forward. Hopefully we will be involved in decision-making at an early stage.' Finally he regretted the slow progress of the 'staff travel' campaign - but guaranteed that it would not go away.

PENSIONS

The President declared that the most important and time-sensitive campaign facing the union was the issue of pensions. 'ASLEF has stuck to our four original principles: a 10.56% maximum contribution level, no reduction in benefits, no closure of schemes and opening schemes to new members and the streamlining of the pension committees.' Yet,

he said, the Rail Pensions Commission had not addressed any single one of them.

'Instead they came out with a proposal for a 'career average pension'. Let me tell you what a career average pension means to ASLEF: it means a 24% reduction in your pension payments. ASLEF says, and will continue to say, 'No!'

'I'll tell you what I would volunteer for - the system managers have. When they get a job for a year and a day, they raid the pension fund for another 35 years before they finish. I promise you this - we, ASLEF, are going to retain the final salary scheme.'

Members at Silverlink and Central Trains had, he added, already proved ASLEF's commitment to defending pensions.

ONLY ONE UNION

Finally Alan paid tribute to the union's staff who had played their part in making ASLEF what it is once again. We are a lay member, branch based, trade union that has regained its political clout and is strong and organised enough to represent our members efficiently and effectively in the way they deserve. Alan's final message was uncompromising: 'There is only one trade union for train drivers - and that is ASLEF.'

Notts MP Alan Simpson says petrol reliance is folly



Alan Simpson, the MP for Nottingham where ASLEF held its annual conference, spelled out the 'utter folly' of an economy that is dependent on petroleum.

'Three weeks ago the oil producing countries through OPEC said that even if the price of oil rose to 200 dollars a barrel, that may not be enough. It's a coded way of saying it will rise to this. In fact, it could be 300 dollars a barrel by the end of next year.'

The reason is that 90% of oil producers had passed their peak oil production. 'From slipping from peak production to becoming an oil importer has been shown to take six years,' Alan declared. 'And when petrol prices go through the roof it will affect your supermarket as well as your motor car.'

It was now incontestable, he said, that the rail infrastructure would re-emerge as the most coherent and viable way of moving both people and goods around.

The danger, he added, was that the public could be priced out of rail services. 'I recently travelled by train from Pisa to Sienna,' he said. 'It was a

journey of 100 miles and cost 6.7 euros – about a fiver. That is how it should be in the UK.'

Alan also dwelt on the 'appalling' reaction of the Labour leadership to the electoral defeats of 1 May, which he said heralded the 'death of New Labour'. He could not understand the knee-jerk reaction of ill-advised leaders to leap to the political right as a way of getting out of its problems.

'British workers are on their way back to feudalism,' Alan declared. 'They are still



regulated by Thatcher's agenda. After 11 years of Labour the pendulum hasn't got back to the middle, never mind swung back to us.'

Asked about the Labour leadership, Alan said that Gordon Brown had until 'the end of the year to avoid the end of the pier'. If there was a challenge to the current Prime Minister, Alan said that the only viable alternative candidate was John McDonnell – but he stressed that a change of leader was not going to solve Labour's problems. 'Policies, not personalities are the important thing,' he stressed. 'Only different policies, more in tune with what working people want, will avoid defeat at the next General Election. We cannot afford to be remote from the people we claim to represent.'



We're all Big Brother contestants!

Drivers are among the most monitored and scrutinised of all UK employees. Delegates to the Nottingham conference wanted the union to establish a Monitoring and Surveillance Protocol with employers. Drivers should be aware of who is watching them, where they are doing it from – and who retains the information and data that is collected. ASLEF believes that a degree of privacy at work is a basic human right and a fundamental freedom.

Health, not Trident

The union is committed to campaign against the UK retaining a nuclear deterrent and argues that searching for a replacement for Trident contravenes our commitment to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Delegates in Nottingham insisted that the money and effort would be better spent on defeating poverty and providing for employment, education and health.

ASLEF CONFERENCE 2008 SHORTS



NEW RE-SIGNALLING SCHEMES

The Portsmouth Branch called for the union to enter urgent discussions with a view to having a member of ASLEF being included as part of signal sighting. An ASLEF representative should be able to view all new signals before they are commissioned for use 'because we have the expertise – and indeed the self-interest! – to make sure it is done properly'.

CARING FOR ELDERLY

The union's Retired Members Section (RMS) argues that caring for the elderly must include proper non-means tested financial support for carers. Moreover older people residing in care

homes should receive free personal care, irrespective of where they live in the UK. ASLEF will argue for an urgent review of the provision of care, nursing and residential homes. 'Pensioners currently stand to lose not only their dignity and their rights to decent treatment, but also their financial assets,' a delegate declared.

BEING SICK IS NOT A CRIME

The AAD told the Executive Committee to instruct its negotiators to renegotiate any TOC, FOC or LUL management attendance systems to ensure that no legitimate certified sickness be part of any Managing For Attendance Process or Disciplinary Procedure.

THE WRITING'S OFF THE WALL

The union condemned without reservation the cowards who resort to offensive graffiti as means of expressing their bigotry'. The union supports management who take disciplinary action in the cases of homophobic and other offensive graffiti – and will even take action itself.

This activity is demeaning and frightening to its intended victims, especially gay drivers who are not 'out' at work. One delegate said that, 'Scrawlings on toilet or other walls may seem harmless – but it can be deeply offensive and lead to fear and depression in their intended victims.'

Not only does this activity contravene ASLEF's policies on equality and respect for co-workers – it may also be illegal.

'Stop UK military aid to my country' pleads Colombian

ANA LUCIA PINZON, the leader of the Colombian public sector union FENALTRASE, urged ASLEF members, 'Please continue to pressure your government to stop sending military aid to Colombia. It only goes to intensify the war, the violence and the human rights abuses in my country. Instead your government could be sending humanitarian and social aid,' she said.

Speaking at the Nottingham AAD, Ana said, 'Labour rights have been dismantled in my country. Less than 3 million workers have contracts of employment. The rest have

flexible contracts, work in the informal economy - or are unemployed.'

Ana said the quality of employment in Colombia had also deteriorated - and wages have failed to keep up with inflation. 'The country's wealth is concentrated in the hands of very few, leaving the majority of the population living in poverty. There is vast inequality.

Colombia now has one of the highest rates of inequality and poverty levels in Latin America.'

Trade unionists in Colombia suffer from a huge array of human rights abuses, and it remains the most dangerous



country in which to be a trade unionist. 'Thousands of my colleagues have been killed in recent times. Already 26 trade unionists have been murdered

this year. Teachers, agricultural workers, health, finance and state worker are among those most affected by this violence.'

It is something Ana know about only too well - having been shot in the back twice last year. But the dreadful experience has failed to dent her enthusiasm or her commitment, even though she told delegates, 'Last year my comrade Guillermo Rivera, another public sector trade union leader, was taken away by police as he took his young daughter to school. He has not been seen since.'

Making her plea for the support of ASLEF members, Ana said, 'We need international solidarity to strengthen our call for an end to the armed conflict, for a peacefully negotiated solution to the conflict, for an end to the abuses.'

Alan Moir: chairing for Polmadie!

WHEN Alan Moir was asked to chair the 2008 ASLEF Annual Assembly of Delegates (AAD), he accepted the 'great honour' with alacrity. 'I was delighted both for myself and for my branch. Polmadie has been low profile and I hope this puts it back onto the ASLEF map,' he said.

Alan impressed delegates with the quiet, calm, self-possessed authority he brought to the task - but he is no stranger to formal meetings. He enjoys politics and he's active within the Labour Party where he lives. He is currently Chair of the East Dumbartonshire CLP, he's been active on the Strathclyde Passenger Transport Authority and he's served as a local councillor in East Dumbartonshire.

Alan's experience of ASLEF's AAD stretches back to 1995 when he represented Corkerhill. Now he's back at the place where he began his railway career as an assistant driver in 1987. 'I've met a lot of fantastic people in my time on the railways,' he says, 'and Polmadie is a good place to work. It's a diverse branch with both Virgin West Coast and First Scotrail drivers. It gives you the chance to see how other companies function.'

He's been active in ASLEF at local and district council and he's now secretary of the Polmadie branch.

'Many of the AAD industrial issues are the same as when I first came,' he says. 'But it's also good to see so many

changes. If there's no change, there's no life. Nottingham is a different location for a conference - we got used to being in sea-side towns. I also think the electronic voting is a step in the right direction - it makes the whole process much more open and transparent.'

It's the end of a long week, but Alan says, 'I know I'm supposed to complain about all the hours it takes from my life to carry out union and political duties - but I don't feel like that. It's a fantastic personal experience. We do things because we feel we should, and we get satisfaction from it. I don't think there is anything more gratifying than trying to make a difference.'



Alan chaired the conference with a quiet and dignified authority LEFT: These are the people Alan kept under control!
Conference photographs: John Birdsall

SUPPORT FOR IRANIANS This year's AAD declared its support for the people - as opposed to the government - of Iran. The regime, it said, 'actively oppresses its own people, with trade unionists, students and women's rights activists imprisoned, tortured and brutally killed'. The delegates want to encourage branches to support the activities of the Hands Off the People of Iran (HOPI) campaign. Evidence of delegates' own commitment came with a collection that raised £605.00 for the organisation that is supported by, among hundred of others, filmmaker Ken Loach, the Green Party, Queen's Counsel Michael Mansfield and representatives of Labour, SNP and Plaid Cymru.



Croydon members celebrate with Steve Grant in traditional surrounds



Kevin Lindsay's work is formally recognised by EC President Alan Donnelly

Croydon celebrates - now light rail means ASLEF!

WE asked Croydon Tram and Light Rail branch secretary **Robert Sambridge** for his response to the news that ASLEF has secured recognition at the company for all drivers. Here is what he had to say

History was made on 31 May when we became the first light rail branch to be awarded formal recognition by a major railway employer. After almost eight years of effort the breakthrough was achieved by our fine Scotrail colleagues and their indomitable organiser Kevin Lindsay who, in their negotiations, said, 'No deal unless Croydon is included!'

It is humbling that our victory at the bottom of the country was so ably assisted by drivers at the far end of this island. We want to thank Kevin, all our Scottish colleagues and everyone who worked so hard on our behalf.

We also want to thank our friends in West Brompton branch who took us under their wing in our formative years – and all those on the District 8 council who accepted us for what we are: professional rail drivers who wanted to be in a professional rail union. We should specially mention EC member Terry Wilkinson and Organiser Steve Grant who never gave up.

We have the victory – but it is not just a victory for us. It's a victory for all this union. We don't mind sharing it with you! We were never on our own. We were always part of ASLEF. We remember Colin Smith in 2003 calling us 'quality members' – and it's in writing!

We think each member of our union is a quality member – and each of our officers is the same from the GS and Organiser to the

lead officers and AAD delegates. This is how we have been able to stand up to the might of the TUC, Unite and major employers. A lot of mountains have skids under them!

These people deserve our thanks and gratitude.

Our thoughts now are with ASLEF members in Metrolink - the metro system in Manchester. I look forward to a fully-recognised delegate from the Croydon Light Rail branch taking the hand of the equally recognised Metrolink delegate at a future AAD.

We are proud of ASLEF – the last remaining union never to have amalgamated with another or to have changed its name. Long may that tradition continue!

We have proved what 'brother and sisterhood' really means and in the process we have set a precedent for light rail across the country. We're proud to be ASLEF!

● The government has pledged £244 million towards the £328 million cost of extending the Manchester Metrolink tram to Oldham, Rochdale and Chorlton. It also promises an upgraded network and faster and more frequent services.

SOLUTIONS TO INTER-UNION RIVALRY There should not be problems of competition and hostility between unions working in the rail industry. If only those involved would stick to a couple of easily explained and rather obvious principles, we could avoid a great deal of unnecessary ill-feeling and time-wasting. That was the clear message to come from last month's union conference.

So what should those principles be? Firstly, the unions jointly should apply themselves to the real problem – which is recruitment of non-members. And secondly management should join with us in preventing any other organisations trying to muscle in on rail.

The central message to the RMT, for example, should be to accept a situation that has existed for decades. That is, ASLEF is an independent craft union: we have, for the past 130 years, represented train drivers. They are ours – and the RMT can be secure with other rail employees below management level, which is the preserve of the TSSA.

Secondly all existing rail unions should warn managers that they should not tolerate outside organisations trying to infiltrate our membership and cause industrial chaos.

It should be simple. Delegates regretted that it was not.

SUPPORT FOR RMT BRANCH DISPUTE At the behest of the union's AAD, the General Secretary wrote to Brother Creamer of the Nottingham RMT branch, saying, 'The ASLEF conference today voted to extend the support and solidarity of our members to your branch in your dispute with East Midlands Trains concerning Sunday working for your senior conductor grades.

'After hearing the background to the dispute, our conference delegates unanimously backed your just and reasonable demands. We wish you every success with your action. If there is any practical assistance we can offer to you, please contact me.'

UNIONS NEED TO CROSS BORDERS The Kings Cross International branch wants the union to work towards an 'exchange facility' with unions in other countries where our members work. It points out that our members will increasingly be working in other countries where legal systems do not match our own. In the event of a fatality in France, for example, a driver is automatically taken to the police station for questioning.

NOTTINGHAM CONFERENCE – FIRST IMPRESSION

NEIL ADAMS' first ASLEF conference was 'a bit stressful, difficult to understand at the beginning – but ultimately very rewarding. Oh - and exhausting!'

Neil has been an ASLEF member since he started as a driver in Aylesbury 1991. Seven years later he went to Marylebone where he continues to be a committee member and union activist. 'At the start, although I did want to be actively involved, I wasn't sure what role I wanted to play in the union. When the equalities committees were set up in 2000, I put myself forward as the LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans) representative for my district.

I do tend to throw myself into

things as much as possible, but with the best will in the world, enthusiasm does flag sometimes. This AAD has stoked it up again! Obviously LGBT issues matter to me, but I feel passionately about everything the union is doing – and now more than ever. Although I'm not a Labour Party member, I was very impressed with the MP who was urging the Party to get back to what – and who – it used to stand for. I was impressed with both the politicians: I'm sure they'll both support our union.

I certainly didn't have their confidence when I went to the rostrum to speak for the first time this week! I was full of fear and foreboding, but it did get



Neil Adams with Peter Blake and Anne Johnson (for once!) in the background. Conference photographs: John Birdsall

easier as the week went on. I've chaired sessions at TUC conferences on LGBT issues, but this was different. I felt I needed to have everything correct for these people – my fellow drivers and peers.

The procedures were hard to follow. My advice to any new delegate would be to try to visit an AAD the year before as a visitor. That way you can be effective early on – and a heck of a lot less nervous!



It's either a thoughtful expression – or a Borat impersonation!

NOTTS – 125 NOT OUT



Keith hands Brother Hawarth his gold badge

THE Nottingham branch invited delegates to share in their celebrations of 125 years of the local branch. 'It took you this long to find the perfect conference venue!' we were told. During the enjoyable evening Keith Norman presented 'J.J.'. Hawarth with a union badge celebrating his 49 years and 9 months on the railway. 'J.J.', who started on the railway on 26 April 1958, told us, 'I've loved this job. I wouldn't have missed it for the world. You couldn't have had a better way to earn your money.' He was on the LCC for over a quarter of a century and was branch chair for a decade.



Eyes down: It's a full house in Nottingham



Technology makes voting open and transparent

GBM LADY'S NOT FOR TURNING!

ONE very welcome speaker in Nottingham was Mary Turner, who has just been elected President of the GMB for the second time. She offered a very clear picture of life as a 'working class heroine' – even though she'd reject that title.

Mary had particularly harsh words for the 'no-win, no-fee' lawyers who now claim to be the great champions of equal pay. 'They have moved in to exploit women, not assist them. Before the trade unions took up the issue of equal pay, financed the test cases and began to secure decent compensation, they were nowhere to be seen. Now that they scent money in it, they are in like cheap salesmen.'

Her union is currently handling over 30,000 cases, mainly for low paid women in local government. 'Unions represent members for nothing and hand all the compensation over directly. These 'no fee' lawyers regularly cream off a third of any award.'

Mary was insistent that closing the equal pay gap needed the injection of more money. 'The solution is not to rob Peter to pay Pauline!' she declared. 'We support equal pay to bring low pay up – not to dumb everybody down.'

Paying tribute to ASLEF's stance against the BNP, Mary said, 'I was born in Ireland and I'm old enough to remember the signs on places to rent that read, 'No Irish, no blacks'. Racism has no part in our society.'



Mary Turner: no time for no-fee layabouts

Out of touch Labour must change – or lose

LABOUR will lose the next election if it fails to reclaim the support of working people and trade unions. That was the stark message from ASLEF's annual conference to Gordon Brown: chasing after the 'floating voters' and the middle ground is pointless if Labour loses touch with its traditional support.

The Oxford branch pointed out that the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds has more members than the Labour Party at present – and delegate after delegate condemned a government which had done nothing to remove restrictions on trade unions, built less houses than Margaret Thatcher,

increased the gap between rich and poor, privatised many health services, done little to improve pensions and led the country into a disastrous and illegal war.

'We recognise that there has been progress on rights for part-time workers, museums are now free of charge and a

minimum wage has been introduced – but the fact is that the New Labour faction is dead.'

Delegates in Nottingham made a distinction between the Labour Party – to which the union is affiliated – and the Labour government – to which it is considerably less attached.

John McDonnell says Brown 'has until end of the year'

GUEST speaker John McDonnell, the MP for Hayes and Harlington and convener of the ASLEF group in Westminster, says that Gordon Brown has 'until the end of the year to avoid a fall from the pier'. He called for a 'programme of political change if we are to win the next election', insisting that it is more important to change policies than personalities.

'Labour needs to re-engage with trade unions. Let's not forget that the Trade Union Freedom Bill I proposed was twice 'talked out' not by the Tories, but by New Labour ministers.'

He said that he watched with disbelief some of the things he has seen under this government – like 15,000 policemen marching through London, the ending of union rights for prison officers and

Labour championing privatisation. 'Only this morning I heard a minister suggest that private companies should take over hospitals if they are failing. Even the Tory spokesperson said the NHS should sort out an NHS hospital!'

John argued that housing was a pressing need for working people – and that Labour needed policies to address this. 'Since 1997, the number of homeless has doubled to 80,000,' he declared. 'The solution is to go back to council housing. Only councils will build the amount of affordable housing we need. And it can be done – Atlee proved this after the 1945 war. It is no solution to tell councils to hand over land to the private sector.'

He says the keys to a Labour victory are improved public services, ending poverty,



John McDonnell says policies count, not personalities

fighting for equality, introducing trade union rights and securing peace security and justice

'These are the things we must work towards,' he said. 'Otherwise we will sleepwalk into a Tory government.'



Hands across the globe – GSs from the UK and Australia

The wizard from Oz!

ROBERT HAYDEN, the National Secretary of the Rail, Tram and Bus Union of Australia, treated delegates at the union conference to a well-delivered, good-natured and thought-provoking address. The scale of his country means that the RTBU's national executive only meets for a couple of days twice a year – a statement which earned Bob the undivided attention of our own general secretary!

Bob spoke about the relationship of his union and the Australian Labour Party. 'During the election that ousted Howard and returned Labour we didn't give money to Labour, but to MPs who supported our campaign for union and workers' rights. Now we want the Labour government to answer our knock on the door not because we gave them money – but because we're so well organised that if they don't open up they'll find the whole rank-and-file standing on the door-mat!'

Robert pointed out that many of the issues he heard debated at Nottingham were very familiar to him – SPADS, level crossing, cab ergonomics, standards. 'We're all engaged in the same fight,' he said. 'That makes it important that we can exchange information and ideas.'

CRIMINAL COMPENSATION

ASLEF is to raise the anomalies within Criminal Injuries Compensation once again. It is unreasonable that the Authority requires that a driver needs to be absent from work for a minimum of six weeks after an incident at work that results in either physical or mental injury. There is no logic in refusing any compensation to someone who has suffered but is able to resume work before the magical six week period.

The union will seek changes in legislation to create a more reasonable system.

On-line members off message

Should applicants be allowed to join the union on-line and be entitled to the benefits of membership immediately?

While the union would like to make joining ASLEF as easy as possible, delegates at last month's conference rejected the plan as they felt that such a system could be abused.

On the positive side on-line membership was attractive because the union could offer applicants interim protection from day one, and it also made it easier for people joining from another union. They wouldn't have to 'run the gauntlet' of the previous organisation.

The other side of the coin is the concern that 'wrong' uns could slip in the back door, including BNP members: and it was felt that automatic membership undermined the principle that the branches are the central cog in the union machine.

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WATTS THE DIFFERENCE! RAILWAYS ARE ELECTRIFYING!

On these two pages, Keith Norman introduces a new, major campaign that ASLEF is determined to pursue. Its objective is the electrification of rail. There has never been a better time to raise the issue. As Keith says here, we can gather support from passengers, trade unionists, environmentalists and even - at the moment at least! – government ... In 1979 British Rail envisaged five teams stringing up 250 route-miles of overhead line equipment every year – but the programme was halted under Thatcher. This time, ASLEF argues, nothing must come in our way ...



WE'D ALL BENEFIT FROM ELECTRIFICATION

There is a growing consensus that the electrification of rail must change from being a desirable objective into a vital necessity. A number of pressing events have come together to cause this: the shortage of oil, the concern over the environment, pressure on cab conditions and demand from passengers for higher standards.

GOVERNMENT VIEW(S)

Last month even Ruth Kelly, the Minister of State for Transport, began to make positive noises about electrification. This was welcome, if a little unexpected. Only last year the government published a White Paper called 'Delivering a Sustainable Railway'. The section dealing with electrification was discouraging. It said, 'It would not be prudent to commit now to 'all-or-nothing' projects, such as network-wide electrification' although the case would be 'kept under review' (which is government-speak for shoved in a cupboard and ignored). The White Paper outlined three main reasons for not pursuing it. These were

- Electrification is expensive. It would divert funds from investment that is more urgently needed in increasing carrying capacity
- The future performance of electric and self-powered trains is unpredictable. There remain considerable uncertainties about the relative pace at which these technologies will develop
- Electrification would be more cost-effective if it were implemented after radio-based cab signalling

However, last month the government position seems to have changed. Ruth Kelly told a 'Transport Times' Conference on 'Action on Climate Change: A Role for Transport'. 'In last year's Rail White Paper we rightly prioritised investment for the next five years in a massive increase in carrying capacity – but looking beyond that I can see great potential for a rolling programme of electrification.'

She went on to say that, 'Electric trains are cheaper to operate than diesels, require less maintenance, and emit between 20%-35% less carbon' and 'Electric trains are zero emission

at point of use – improving local air quality' and they offer 'additional carrying capacity and improved passenger comfort.'

IS EUROPE ELECTRIFYING?

Basically, when it comes to electrification, we're doing badly by anybody's standards. In Europe we come 24th out of 33! Here's a list of percentage of European track that was electrified at the end of 2005:

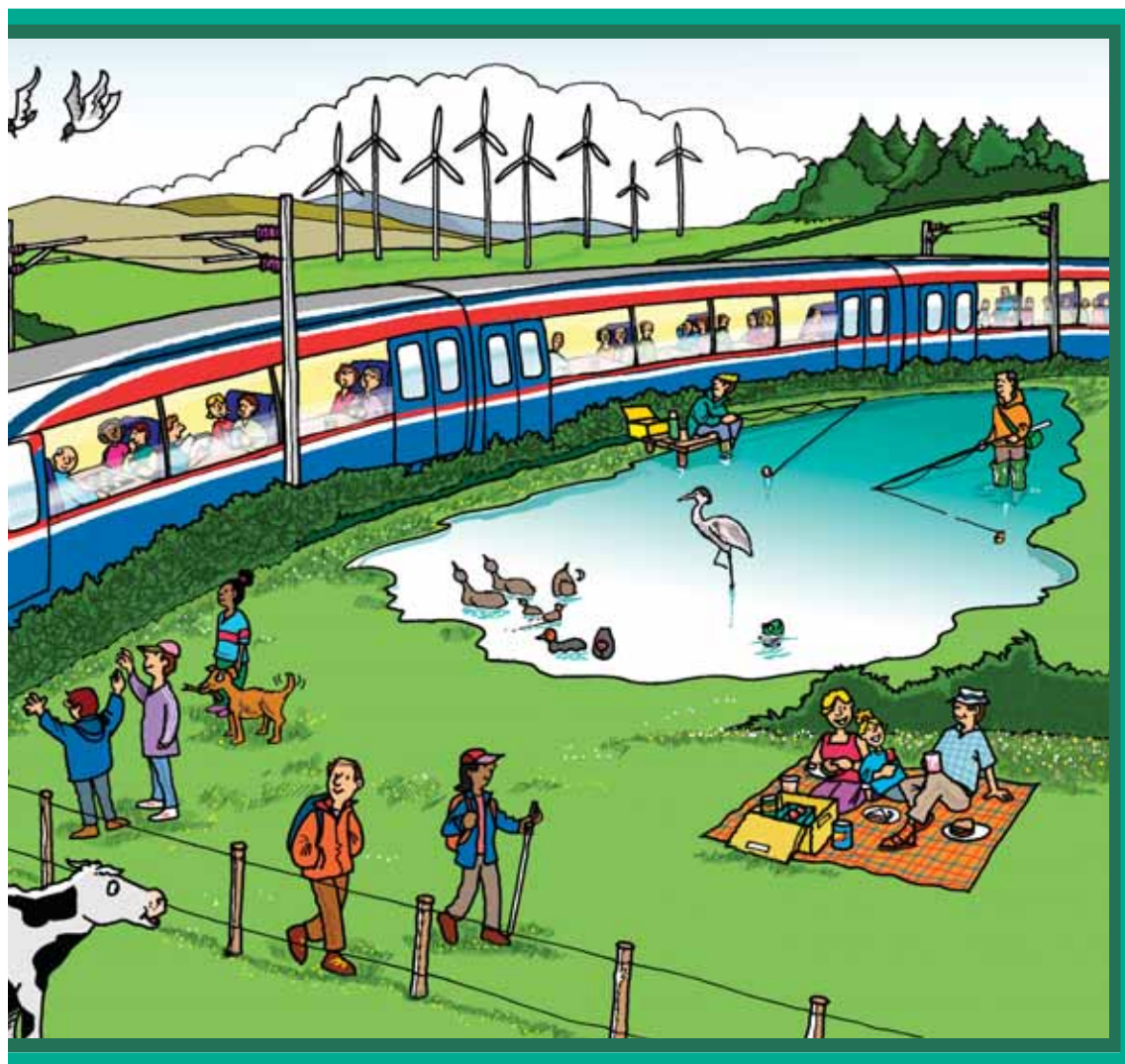
Country	Per cent of Track which is electrified
Switzerland	100
Luxembourg	95.3
Belgium	84.0
Sweden	77.4
Bosnia-Herzegovina	74.6
Netherlands	73.4
Bulgaria	69.3
Italy	69.2
Norway	61.9
Austria	61.5
Poland	60.5
Germany	56.5
Spain	56.3
Portugal	50.6
France	50.4
Finland	45.7
Slovakia	42.5
Slovenia	41.0

Romania	36.9
Croatia	36.1
Hungary	35.8
Serbia-Montenegro	34.9
Macedonia	33.3
Great Britain	32.9
Czech Republic	31.5
Denmark	28.0
Latvia	19.5
Estonia	13.7
Lithuania	6.9
Greece	3.2
Ireland (Rep)	2.7
Ireland (North)	0.0
Albania	0.0

WHERE DOES THE EXTRA ELECTRICITY COME FROM?

One of the concerns is about how additional amounts of electricity would be generated. We at ASLEF have always been suspicious of nuclear power, and were quite alarmed in May this year when Gordon Brown said he wanted a 'more ambitious' nuclear power programme

This means that our argument for electrification needs to be taken on a stage further. We are seeking such a major change in rail infrastructure that we have to have every corner covered, every argument rehearsed. We will be



considering different ways of generating electricity over the coming months – from 'clean coal' to using wind and tide and growing bio-fuels. One thing that seems certain is that oil is not a viable option for the future.

OIL IS A BAD BET

Oil is believed to have already reached its peak production, and can only decline from now on. Of the world's 98 oil producing countries, 64 are thought to have passed their peak, and 60 of them are producing 2-3% less every year (this is something Alan Simpson discusses on page 6). Many experts believe oil will have run out completely 40 years from now.

At the same time the development of China's economy means their demand for oil will double over the next 15 years, and India expects to need 30% more by 2013. The Oil Depletion Analysis Centre claims, 'The first half of the oil age is now closed. It lasted 150 years and saw the rapid expansion of industry, transport, trade, agriculture and financial capital, allowing the population to expand six-fold. The

second half now dawns, and will be marked by the decline of oil and all that depends on it - including financial capital."

The price of oil is widely expected to double within the next 12 months.

WHO WILL PROVIDE THE FUNDING?

When rail was privatised, BR's planned electrification went with it. It is no surprise. The privatised franchised railway system is by its nature concerned with the short term. If you've got a franchise for seven years, there's no point in worrying yourself about year eight. Put bluntly, electrification offers no profit to Network Rail and the TOCs and FOCs don't hold franchises long enough to invest for the long-term.

ASLEF believes that to introduce change on the scale we envisage – as vast as that from steam to diesel – will mean funding from the public purse. 'Modern Railways' suggests that the infrastructure of wires and posts will cost £400,000 for every kilometre of single track. The 'free market' is not geared to such expenditure. It doesn't have long-

term social interest at its heart.

That is not a criticism. It is a fact. This campaign will need solid and unwavering political commitment from all parties if it is to succeed.

But there will be rewards. Electrification will bring long term savings. Because there are fewer moving parts, train maintenance becomes simpler and cheaper, and because the vehicles vibrate less, electric traction trains have longer operational lives. But regardless of this, if oil is really not an option – there is nowhere else to go.

ALLIES COMING OUT OF OUR EARS!

Apart from the environmental aspects, electrification can help the continued rise of our railways. Journeys on electric traction trains are quieter, smoother and usually quicker. They are less noisy for people who live near lines. Marketing specialists talk about the 'sparks effect', saying that as passengers notice increased investment is made, they are attracted to this mode of transport. Electric traction also benefits smaller stations because trains can stop more often with



ASLEF has long argued for the electrification of the UK rail network. Our three chief arguments are that electrification

- would make for a railway that is cleaner for both driver and passenger
- cuts down on the emissions that cause global warming
- by cutting reliance on oil, ensures there will be a rail network in the future.

The campaign must involve us with a range of other organisations who share some of our objectives. In particular this must involve passenger groups, environmental campaigners and those with concerns about oil dependency.

It must also involve other central issues, specifically about the way that the additional electricity demand will be generated.

Who is to provide funding for such a major project?

We are arguing for perhaps the most fundamental change in the railway infrastructure since we moved from steam to diesel. Obstacles and objections will litter our path. It will not be easy, nor quick.

But I believe that it is essential. And I am convinced that if we all play our part, we can be successful.

For all our sakes, I hope I'm right.

KEITH NORMAN - General Secretary – ASLEF

smaller time delays – so it is easier to service less popular stations.

WHEN DO WE START?

ASLEF's campaign starts now. When Ruth Kelly said she saw 'great potential for a rolling programme of electrification', she committed the government to set up a 'cross-industry working group to re-examine the business case for electrification, explore how costs can be brought down much further and agree priority schemes.' She aims to have an initial study completed during 2008.

ASLEF will play its full part in that process because we believe that we can, through electrification, improve conditions for staff and passengers, ensure the future of a growing and efficient railway network and stop unnecessary waste of our planet's resources.

ASSOCIATED SOCIETY OF LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEERS AND FIREMEN

SUMMARY OF FINANCIAL INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2007

Under the provisions of Section 32A of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 ASLEF is obliged to provide members with a statement summarising its financial affairs.

Income and expenditure

	£
Total income	4,681,172
Total expenditure	4,017,994

£4,082,630 of total income comprised payments in respect of membership.

Political Income and Expenditure

The figures above include £105,232 income and £106,271 expenditure in respect of the political fund.

Salaries and Benefits

	Salary	Employer's National Insurance contributions	Pension contributions	Benefits	Total
	£	£	£	£	£
K Norman					
General Secretary	71,381	7,777	22,856	21,141	123,155
A Donnelly					
President	10,971	901			11,872
Executive Committee					
H Bradley	21,956	2,455			24,411
B Davies	10,627	1,044			11,671
D Calfe	7,435	309			7,744
N Gibson	31,315	3,344			34,659
T McDonald	31,209	3,596			34,805
S Weller	28,446	3,100			31,546
T Wilkinson*	17,447	329			17,776

*includes payments to London Underground of £9,585

INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF THE ASSOCIATED SOCIETY OF LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEERS AND FIREMEN

We have audited the financial statements of the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen for the year ended 31 December 2007 which comprise the Consolidated Income and Expenditure Account, Balance Sheet, Cash Flow Statement and the related notes. These financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention as modified by the revaluation of freehold property and the accounting policies set out therein.

This report is made solely to the union's members, as a body, in accordance with the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the union's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditors' report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the union and the union's members, as a body for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

RESPECTIVE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND AUDITORS

The Executive Committee's responsibilities for preparing the Annual Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and relevant United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice) are set out in the Statement of the Executive Committee's Responsibilities.

Our responsibility is to audit the financial statements in accordance with relevant legal and regulatory requirements and International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland).

We report to you our opinion as to whether the financial statements give a true and fair view and are properly prepared in accordance with the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992. We also report to you, if in our opinion, the finance paragraph contained in the Annual Report is consistent with the financial statements, if the union has not kept proper accounting records or if we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

We read the other information contained in the Annual Report and consider the implications for our report if we become aware of any apparent misstatements within it.

BASIS OF AUDIT OPINION

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland) issued by the Auditing Practices Board. An audit includes an examination, on a test basis, of evidence relevant to the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. It also includes an assessment of the significant estimates and judgements made by the Executive Committee in the preparation of the financial statements, and of whether the accounting policies are appropriate to the union's circumstances, consistently applied and adequately disclosed.

We planned and performed our audit so as to obtain all the information and explanations which we considered necessary in order to provide us with sufficient evidence to give reasonable assurance that the financial statements are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or other irregularity or error. In forming our opinion we also evaluated the overall adequacy of the presentation of information in the financial statements.

OPINION

In our opinion the financial statements give a true and fair view, in accordance with relevant United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice, of the state of the union's affairs as at 31 December 2007 and of its results for the year then ended and have been properly prepared in accordance with the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 and the information given in the finance paragraph contained in the Annual Report is consistent with the financial statements.

Hard Dowdy
a trading style of:
Chantrey Vellacott DFK LLP
Chartered Accountants
Registered Auditor
LONDON
15 April 2008

IRREGULARITY STATEMENT

Under Section 32A(6a) of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 we are obliged to publish the following statement. A member who is concerned that some irregularity may be occurring or has occurred in the conduct of the financial affairs of the union may take steps with a view to investigating further, obtaining clarification and if necessary securing regularisation of that conduct.

The member may raise any such concern with such one or more of the following as it seems appropriate to raise it with; the officials of the union, the trustees of the property of the union, the auditor or auditors of the union, the Certification Officer (who is an independent officer appointed by the Secretary of State) and the police.

Where a member believes that the financial affairs of the union have been or are being conducted in breach of the law or in breach of the rules of the union and contemplates bringing civil proceedings against the union or responsible officials or trustees, he should consider obtaining independent legal advice.

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Social Leeds celebrate retirements

ON 19 May the Leeds branch held a social to mark the retirements of Bros P. Hickling, J. Turner and K. Bannister. We also took the opportunity to make presentations to 11 retired members who had achieved 50 years loyal service with ASLEF.

District organiser Nick Whitehead presented the 'younger ones' with their certificates and small gifts from the branch, while general secretary Keith Norman made the presentations to the 50 year members.

A very good evening was had by all and it was nice to see such a variation in the ages of the people who came along to celebrate with our brothers. A quick calculation showed that we recognised over 600 years solidarity to the union - a very proud and yet humbling fact.

I would like to wish all the new retired



members a very long, happy and healthy retirement - and to those who celebrated their 50th year, continued health and happiness.

Pauline Cawood Secretary – Leeds branch



Ramsgate visit NW3

GENERAL SECRETARY Keith Norman presented one of Ramsgate's longest-serving members – Driver Arthur Walkiden – with a badge recognising 50 years loyalty and service. Arthur, a former LDC representative, said how much he had enjoyed his time with ASLEF and what this had meant to him. Congratulations, Arthur!

Our Branch Secretary, Dave Bull, left a bit of our branch history at head office. This was the badge we struck commemorating 100 years of the Ramsgate branch. It is now displayed at Arkwright Road with other union memorabilia.

Afterwards, we were treated to a very informative day. We got to see how effective and efficient Arkwright Road is. This made me realise that my subscription is not only for a diary and a bit of representation. We are standing on the shoulders of giants in the union world – there is much more to ASLEF than you realise.

I'd advise anyone to put their name forward and take a look around on your annual branch visit to head office. You will see how approachable, friendly and informative they all are at Arkwright Road.

Brilliant day! Thanks to all at ASLEF head office.

Driver Darren Turrell Ramsgate Branch



HITHER GREENS Annual Reunion at the Railway Club took place on 2 May, and they had kindly invited the Retired Members Section (RMS) secretary Tony West and RMS committee members Alan Taylor, Dave Weddle and myself. The event has been advertised in the Journal, and it was pleasing to see the district's EC member Simon Weller and its organiser Graham Morris in attendance.

The branch certainly made us welcome and it was good to see so many retired and working colleagues in attendance. It really keeps the old grey cells working to revisit the familiar banter and to hear stories recounted and experiences relived.

General Secretary Keith Norman presented retirement certificates to John White and Keith Simes, but unfortunately another pair, Terry Waldron and Jeff Clark, couldn't make it. We wish them all the best and hope to welcome all four into RMS.

ASLEF Membership service badges were presented to the Branch Chairman Andy Flett, Dave Spencer and Don Clark (all 40 years), Brian Peters (35 years) and Phil Cardy and Branch Secretary John Staggs (30 years).

On the recommendation of the Hither Green Branch, the ASLEF executive committee granted honorary membership to John Davies to recognise his sterling work for the union, especially during the miners strike.

On behalf of all who attended I would like to thank John Staggs, Andy Flett and Paul Stokes, who is Chair of the Hither Green Welfare Club. A special mention should be made to Paul's wife Liz and her friend Karen Tucker who produced a great buffet that was eagerly enjoyed by all those present. Finally our gratitude to the bar staff who ensured that no one died of thirst!

Peter Smith – Reporter - RMS



YOKER BRANCH NEWS At Yoker's April branch meeting District Organiser Kevin Lindsay and EC member Hugh Bradley presented Yoker Driver Matt McGinn with a plaque and tankard to celebrate his retirement from First Scotrail. Matt, who was a member of ASLEF for 42 years, is a quiet man who is liked by everyone. He will be missed.

Derrick Lowrie, Chairperson
Yoker Branch



ASLEF TRIUMPHANT!

FOR the third consecutive year, Leeds ASLEF, under the astute management of 'Director of Football' Ray Collier, won the prestigious Thompson's 5-a-side trophy **reports the completely unbiased Leeds branch secretary Pauline Cawood.**

Thompsons organise the annual tournament of trade union teams from the Leeds area. ASLEF entered two teams – one made up of drivers from Northern, the other from East Midlands Trains. They were put into two groups, with the winners of each competing to be the overall winners, and the two group runners-up playing for third place.

ASLEF finished as runners-up in the first group, having beaten the FBU (3-0) and GMB1 (6-4), drawn with Thompson's Sheffield (3-3) and accidentally losing to UNISON (3-1).

We won the second group, defeating Thompson's Leeds (9-2), GMB2 (3-1), PCS (18-1) and drawing two apiece with FBU2.

Tragically, the ASLEF EMT side were overcome 6-4 by FBU2. However, good triumphed when ASLEF Northern retained the trophy by beating UNISON by 8-2.

Members participating were Graham Darby, Darren Allsopp, Greg Coppinger, Darren Caslin, Darren Bryan, Richard Smith, Dave Jones, Steve Broome, Dave Littlewood, Thomas Matthews, Duncan Grainger, Dave Storrie, Richard Todd and Wayne Oddy.

Norwich reunion flies high from down under!

THE Norwich Branch's retired members' section reunion this year welcomed everyone who turned up – but saved a special greeting for 87-year old Dick Mulliner, a retired driver who now lives in Australia.

John Pipe, one of the main organisers of the event at Arkwright's bar in the city, said that the reunions have changed since the early days when they were exclusively for drivers. 'Now we welcome everyone who worked on the railway,' he says.

The event was covered with full page articles in the local newspaper, the Norwich Evening News. 'It's always worth tipping off your local rag,' John says. 'We don't know how interesting we are!'



Dick Mulliner travelled from Australia for the Norwich branch reunion

KEEPING TRACK WHAT THE UNION WAS DOING 100 AND 50 YEARS AGO

Indignation at Euston and warnings of political apathy in unions – more cuttings from ASLEF's rich history ...

100 YEARS AGO

In the July 1908 edition of the Journal, 'G.A.P.' reported on union anger at an honest man victimised ...

"This is how I heard one man describe Mr. Fox's speech at Euston in defence of Driver Martin. Yes, it was mixed and spicy. The mixture lay in the fact that despite the broad humour of the speech there was a strong sense of indignation at the treatment of one who, though not a member of our Society, was an engineman. Speaking of "the stigma cast upon an honest man who was doing his duty", our leader said "If you were of my mind you would demand that a public apology was made by that inspector (Colonel Yorke)."

".....Touching the evidence against the dead man, Mr. Fox said: "Here we have a guard who said the brake was properly tested before starting and that there was a foreman porter who saw it tested. Then we get along a little further and we find that the foreman porter was so near to the guard that he never saw him." "As soon as there was an accident", Mr. Fox said, "it was at once heralded by the Press, but you never found it heralded when the blacklegs were running about and we practical men –for our own lives' sakes –stopped and kept out of the way."

50 YEARS AGO

D.K. Pullen's 'Page for Motormen' in July 1958 had a stark warning that a Tory government could mean interference in industrial relations!

"Whatever else may be said about the settlement of our claim for an increase in wages, this much is beyond dispute: THE VAST MAJORITY OF OUR MEMBERSHIP NOW REALISES AS NEVER BEFORE THAT A TORY GOVERNMENT MEANS DIRECT POLITICAL INTERFERENCE IN TRADE UNION NEGOTIATIONS .

Lively discussion in our Branches and, particularly, at the last quarterly meeting of the London District Council, has revealed a general if somewhat belated acknowledgement of the strong logic in the arguments of those who, for many years past, have warned of the danger industrially of political apathy inside the Trade Union Movement.

"If the Tories have done nothing else, at least they have succeeded in rousing the political consciousness of our members."

AND FINALLY ...

"Agreement has at last been reached on the provision of hand towels. Two small towels of unbleached huckaback will be issued annually to each man. The S.R. Sectional Council have agreed that the laundering of these cloths will be the responsibility of the individual who will receive payment of 10/- per year for his trouble."

GARRY CLARK – A GOOD OL' BOY

IT IS with deep regret that we have to report the passing of Brother Garry Clark, a big man in every sense of the word. He was tragically killed whilst indulging his favourite passion, riding his motorbike.

Garry was a real character, be it through his acerbic wit or his willingness to help others. He was always selfless, no matter what the problem.

Garry - or 'Gaz' as he was better known - started at Bescot in 1987 as a Drivers Assistant before becoming registered as a Driver in the Autumn of 1990. He then moved to Birmingham New Street in 1994 before finally taking his place at Wolverhampton in 2002.

Our thoughts are with Garry and his family during this difficult time and we would like to take this opportunity to pay him tribute. Rest in peace, 'Gaz'

GRAHAME THORNE, BOB EARLAM AND SI GOODE - Wolverhampton Branch



DON HUNTLEY – FAVERSHAM'S FINEST

IT IS with regret I have to report the death at age 83 of one of Faversham's finest - retired Driver Don Huntley.

After starting his railway career at Faversham, Don moved to Gillingham. When he returned to Faversham he became involved in ASLEF and local union business. He was a regular Branch member and was at various times Branch Secretary – a position he held for no less than 27 years - LDC rep and Secretary of District Council No. 1. He was respected on both sides of the negotiating table as an honest and fair man.

After the '82 strike it was down to his leadership that Faversham Branch kept going and flourished.

Don retired about two years early to look after his first wife who was ill at the time. Later he re-married and often attended Branch and Social Club functions.

His funeral at Charing Crematorium on Wednesday 14 May 2008 was well attended and on behalf of the Branch we send our condolences to his wife, Freda, and Don's three children from his first marriage.

Steve Gurdler – Secretary - Faversham Branch

JOHN 'JEKE' BLUES

IT IS my sad duty to advise colleagues and friends that John 'Jeke' Blues passed away on 29 March in Perth Royal Infirmary aged 76 years.

Jeke joined the railway as a cleaner in May 1947 after a brief spell as a butcher's message boy. Promotion to fireman followed in 1949 and the following year he was called up for National Service, mostly based at officers' stables in Germany where his love of horses, both on and off the track, was forged. After his stint in Germany he was

offered a position as an apprentice jockey, but chose to return to his native Perth and his railway career, waiting until 1961 for his promotion to driver.

The 1955 ASLEF strike was the catalyst that sparked Jeke's interest in union matters, and he became Assistant Branch secretary until 1963, was Branch Secretary from 1963-1974 and then Chairman from 1974 until 1987. He was elected to the Scottish Sectional Council in February 1978 and remained in that role until January 1990, as well as being on the LDC for many years.

During his career, Jeke also served as the branch's Trades Council delegate from 1958-1975, District Council delegate from 1963 until just before he retired in 1991 and was also an ASLEF delegate at Labour Party Conferences and STUC conferences.

Like most committed trade unionists, Jeke was not without his critics. However no one could ever criticise his commitment and determination in the manner in which he conducted ASLEF business. He was a stalwart of the branch and district for decades, and will be missed by many in the trade union movement, not just ASLEF.

Perth branch would like to take this opportunity to pass on their sincerest condolences to Jeke's family.

Gran Murchie – Secretary – Perth Branch

IAN POWER – A POWER OF A MAN

IT IS with great sadness I report the untimely passing of Ian Power at 55 years of age. He was an active member of Wood Lane Branch (LUL).

Born in Dar-es-Salaam Tanganyika on 2 January 1953, Ian passed away peacefully on Saturday 26 April on the Isle of Harris in Scotland.

Beginning a London Underground career

27 years ago as a booking clerk, Ian progressed through the grades to the position of Duty Manager (Trains) based at Seven Sisters depot.

His passion for country pursuits and notably fly fishing, meant he would be able to 'fill his boots' during retirement on the Isle of Harris (Outer Hebrides), in his recently purchased Hebridean home. Unfortunately his wish was sadly fulfilled earlier than expected, having made the decision to retire early and move there after being diagnosed with a brain tumour in late October 2007.

The funeral was held on Friday 9 May at Our Lady of Lourdes church Sawston (Cambs) and indicative of the love and respect for Ian, the service was extremely well attended by family, friends and colleagues alike.

As a close friend for 30 years there is so much I would like to share with you, although I feel it may be enough to say that as a genuine, kind, generous and devoted family man, he will undoubtedly be sadly missed by all who had the good fortune to know him.

Rest in peace Ian.

Paul McCarthy - Tier 1 Health and Safety Representative - Wood Lane

NEWTON HEATH DUO PASS ON

A local man to Newton Heath, Ronnie Godfrey started on the rail at 14, in 1945. He spent his working life at the depot until 1997 when, aged 65, he retired. Ronnie was a classic example of the men of his age: very knowledgeable about his job, popular at the depot and a good ASLEF member. He received his 50 year medallion a year before he retired. Ronnie died in hospital on 6 May after a short illness. It is a sad loss to his wife, family, friends and colleagues.

Another local man to the Newton Heath depot, Len Brindley started his service in March 1940 when he was 18. He worked through until 1985 when he retired under PTG arrangements at the depot closure. Len was a steady, quiet man who spent his early retirement on the bowling green. Ill-health caused him to be moved to the local hospice where he passed away. Our thoughts are with his family at this sad time.

S. Black – Retired Members Section

DAVID BATE – A BIG HEART

IT IS with deep regret that the members at Llandudno Junction report that one of our drivers – Bro Dave Bate – passed away on 20 May after a long illness. Dave was a big-hearted fellow with a dry sense of humour. He will be missed by everyone he met.

Graham Blackett – Secretary – Llandudno Junction branch.

LETTERS to the EDITOR

POTS, KETTLES AND SCOTS



I WONDER if Keith Norman has heard the tale of the pot and the kettle? In the March Journal he described the Scottish Nationalists (SNP) as undemocratic, authoritarian, pompous, and guilty of cronyism. Yet not too long ago he asked for support for Tony Blair – who was the most pompous authoritarian crony-ridden leader this country has ever had!

While the Journal is right to expose what it believes to be wrong, it should not be a platform for undermining the democratically elected government of Scotland in favour of Labour. The Scots rejected Blair's Labour out of hand as it had become a byword for incompetence: hence the success of the SNP.

While far from perfect, the SNP is trying to improve the lot of the people of Scotland, whereas Labour just seems to want to take away British people's rights. For example, since 1997 Labour has introduced over 3,500 new statutory offences - more than any government in history. Also, although we cover 0.2% of the world's surface we are watched by 25% of the world's CCTV cameras!

Thanks to the cowardice of Blair's ministers we are now little more than the 51st state of the US. Blunkett signed an extradition treaty that means Americans don't have to supply evidence to extradite people they want: but if we want the same, we have to provide evidence. The SNP opposes all torture but Blair's Labour has allowed people unconvicted of any crime to be transported through the UK to places like Syria, Algeria and Uzbekistan to be tortured on behalf of the US. It also let British citizens be sent to the concentration camp of Guantanamo Bay – and we are still mired in a war that was started on the basis of the lie that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction. I believe they should be held accountable for their crimes.

If you still think you've got nothing to worry about, consider the Brazilian electrician who ended up with 7 bullets in his head thanks to the Metropolitan Police's 'shoot to kill' policy. He was guilty of running for a train with the wrong colour skin – and the government did nothing.

Do you still think you're OK? Because I don't.

Craig Thompson – Edinburgh

OBITUARIES

KINGS CROSS MOURN LAURIE AND COLIN

I WISH to inform those who knew them that Kings Cross retired drivers Laurie Goddard and Colin Livingstone have 'moved into the top link'.

In his younger days Laurie had a reputation with the ladies that earned him a nick name that unfortunately I cannot print - but his work colleagues will know! One tale recounted to me concerned a group of drivers and firemen standing outside the Engine House when Laurie walked by with a young lady on his arm. It was the worst thing he could have done as railway men, being railway men, are always ready for a wind up. So one of them called out, 'I see you've got a new model then Laurie!'

He was a well-respected character who will be sadly missed.

Colin Livingstone started at Kings Cross Top Shed where he progressed from Cleaner to Fireman, then on to Driver. He also had a nick name 'The Yeti'. This was because Colin was very tall and always sported a big mop of hair. When tales of the Yeti were printed in the papers it was reported that it was very tall and hairy. One of the lads was reading this when he took a look at Colin and said, 'Look, lads – we've found the Yeti!' From then on he was affectionately referred to by that name.

Colin was always a pleasure to work with, well liked and respected.

We send our condolences to family and friends of Laurie and Colin. May they rest in peace.

Peter Smith – Reporter - Kings Cross Branch



These are the pages where you talk to us. We welcome your letters, either by mail to the Journal at 9 Arkwright Road London NW3 6AB or by email to journal@aslef.org.uk

Because of our space constraints, please try to keep your contributions as short as you can.

This month we continue our STAR LETTER feature. The immensely lucky winner will pocket a rich range of ASLEF regalia!

ONE UNION

IN Scotland recently we had concrete proof that while the rail industry might have been divided into scores of different companies, ASLEF remains a single union fighting for all its members - no matter where they work.

We had a problem with surpluses in EWS. It was largely solved by finding employment for 7 drivers with Scotrail and 2 in DRS. This would not have been achieved without the efforts of our union, and especially the work of Scottish district secretary Kevin Lindsay.

I'd like to offer our thanks to Kevin on behalf of the company council, and of course, the members involved. It proves that no one is an 'EWS' ASLEF member, a 'Scotrail' ASLEF member or a 'DRS' ASLEF member. We are all equal members of this union.

John Gahagan – Motherwell on behalf of the Company Council

BRANCH SHOULD DECIDE ITS MEMBERS

OVER the years I have closely followed the emotive debate concerning managers being members of our union. I resent the fact that individuals who until recently were in managerial grades suddenly appear on the

footplate thinking they have a god-given right to be members of our union.

I believe the branch should decide who is allowed to become a member. The branch room is the democratic forum for the issue to be resolved. No one has an automatic right to belong to ASLEF.

Mick Gould – Driver – Bristol

HAULED UP FOR HEADER HORROR

I WONDER why ASLEF continues to support Labour so strongly and to the exclusion of the other parties (one of whom is very likely to be in power after the next election)?

Labour has shown itself to be just as self serving as any other government and shows no signs of delivering on any promises made in respect of rail (or indeed much else). I wonder if you realise how many of your members are not Labour voters, particularly the younger ones? In his column Keith Norman says, 'Gordon Brown said he intends to begin listening to Labours' traditional supporters again'. Shouldn't he be listening to ALL the people he governs?

Anti-Tory bias makes me wonder what relationship ASLEF will have when the Conservatives inevitably take power again.

LETTERS to the EDITOR

The article describing Mayor Boris Johnson's attempt to ban alcohol on the underground is dismissed with derision ('barmy'). I would think ASLEF would instead be trying to ban alcohol on ALL rail services (much easier to enforce) which would cut down instances of staff abuse ASLEF cares about. To put the line 'this is headline grabbing' in an article headlined "Boris booze blitz 'barmy'!" is to me naive and offensive.

ASLEF should be championing its causes through every channel, not tying itself to one political party and certainly not going down the road of some tabloid newspapers and possibly alienating many of its members.

Andrew Milner –
Crosscountry - Leeds

HEAD OFFICE LEEDS THE WAY!

FOLLOWING our branch visit to ASLEF head office at Arkwright Road in April, I'd like to thank Leeds' branch secretary Pauline Cawood for organising it, and Dave Bennett for the guided tour. It was also a pleasure to have district organiser Nick Whitehead with us – he's a true socialist and a philanthropist.

We all had a great day – even if it began with our HST failing a couple of miles outside Leeds!

It was especially memorable for me as it was my first visit to London – and what a place our Head Office is! Very nice architecture and even though the staff were very busy they all

gave us a warm welcome and an explanation of what went on there. The EC let us disturb them even though they were in session and Justice for Colombia gave a brief insight into the shocking treatment of trade unionists in that country.

It was good to get an idea of the personality of our general secretary, Keith Norman – which you don't necessarily get from his Journal columns.

There are rumblings that Arkwright Road may not be our headquarters for too much longer, and it does seem a little impractical for offices. I'm glad I got to see it – and I'm sure that, the spirit of ASLEF can cope with a new building wherever it may be.

Joe McLaughlin - Leeds

COUNCIL RESPOND TO ASSOCIATED DUTIES

THE EWS Traincrew Company Council were surprised by Bro Neil Goodall's letter in the June ASLEF Journal. It appears that Bro Goodall doesn't feel like carrying out the associated duties within the 25a Module, even though he is being paid to carry out these duties as from 1st April 2006.

Before the 25a Module was agreed discussions established that no 25a Module duties would take place at any location until the RMT were consulted. Furthermore, proof of that consultation has to be provided by EWS Management. If the RMT had opposed any 25a

Scheme then EWS TCCC would not agree any such scheme. These duties are usually carried out at unstaffed locations, but there are locations which are staffed at certain times and unstaffed at others. The Method of Working contains all this information and EWS TCCC suggests Bro Goodall consults the MOW for Southampton Docks.

EWS drivers at different locations all over the country regularly carry out 25a duties on trains of over 1748 feet in length without any problems – and EWS's competitor FOC's do not have the same agreements or provide anything like the training in these circumstances.

EWS TCCC are puzzled by Bro Goodall's reference to airline pilots. Airline pilots are responsible for checking exterior items e.g. the removal of fuel lines and equivalent shore supply cables, before pushing out for take off.

EWS TCCC are further puzzled why Bro Goodall raised this issue in the Locomotive Journal and not at his branch where his Area TCCC Rep and Local Reps can keep him

informed and updated.

Finally, EWS TCCC would like to inform Bro Goodall that a robust agreement and flowchart is in place, involving TCCC, Local Reps and Safety Reps before any 25a Module can be introduced, even though he may not feel like carrying out these duties he is being paid for.

ASLEF EWS TCCC

SQUASHING INTO THE 17X

HELLO from Scotland! I would like to ask through the pages of the Journal if any drivers who have had seat failures on trains – especially 17X series – would contact me with the details.

I myself have had an accident involving a 170 seat and was stunned to find out that the same seat failure has been happening as far back as 1999 when the 170's were new!

You could either contact me at 28 Dupplin Road, Perth, PH2 7JB or drop me a line at my email which is awilliams.57@blueyonder.co.uk

Thanks in advance.

Alex Williams – Driver -
Perth

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To advertise in the ASLEF Journal please contact Sarah Francis on 020 7317 8600 or sfrancis@aslef.org.uk

EURO 2008 BADGES A limited (100) edition box set of badges. Each box contains 4 high quality badges individually numbered on the reverse. To secure your set please send £15 payable to 'M. Scott' to Martin Scott, 1 Tamerton Square, Woking, Surrey, GU22 7SZ. Price includes recorded delivery postage. Email: scottfootball@hotmail.com

ROLL UP! ROLL UP! The ASLEF Retired Members Section (RMS) have launched their Grand Prize Draw. Top prize is £1,000 with 2nd and 3rd prizes of £500 and £200. There are also prizes of tickets to Paris by Eurostar and ASLEF regalia so don't miss out. Tickets are available from Alan Taylor. c/o ASLEF Head Office or by email to SAllen@aslef.org.uk

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LETTERS to the EDITOR

FILM SHOWS DISREGARD FOR LIFE



FURTHER to the GS comments in the March Journal about the 'Three and Out' film, I would like to say what a complete disregard these so called 'film makers' have for the lives, not only of the drivers themselves, but to the families of those who have lost their lives in such tragic circumstances.

I am appalled at this being billed as a 'comedy'. It's less than funny that people could get the impression that a 'three and out' rule exists. The next time they hear of a railway suicide/fatality they will be looking at us drivers as if we're some sort of vermin that has done it on purpose to get a pay-off! At the moment, the public look at us with a sense of understanding, but that is likely to change after this.

The film goes on to say about having three in a month... do they not realise that drivers are so traumatised that they have at least a month off work (if not longer) as a recovery process following the awful event? The real vermin are the film makers and writers involved with this pathetic attempt at a movie.

I was equally appalled at the feature on the Jonathon Ross Show where the 'star' said he'd had 'half an hour for the training, but could have done it in about 5 or 10 minutes'!

What sort of message does that send to the travelling public?

We should make every effort to express our disgust at the rubbish and disgusting film.

JOHN THORPE – Driver - Liverpool Street

ASLEF IN WALES

ASLEF delegates welcome investment in Welsh rail infrastructure

ASLEF's delegation to the 34th Welsh TUC in Llandudno consisted of District 7 Organiser Stan Moran and Cardiff Branch delegate Brian Jones. Stan was extremely proud to be re-elected (for the third year running) as the union's representative on the Welsh TUC's General Council while the delegation applauded the election of Vaughan Gething as the new President not least because he is the youngest ever to hold the post at 34 but also the first black man to do so.

In a powerful speech Rhodri Morgan acknowledged that Labour had received a 'bashing' during the May local

elections suggesting that it had lost touch with its roots in working people and trade unions. Morgan asserted that 'the only people who want a recession are the Tories' and called on the union movement to turn the Labour Party around.

Brian took to the podium during the pensions debate with a searing speech on the injustices of current pension provision and urged ASLEF to remain steadfast in its battle for a final salary scheme in the discussions over the proposals of the Railway Pension Commission. A severely curtailed transport debate saw Stan welcome the Assembly's



ASLEF at the Wales TUC (left to right) Brian Jones, Stan Moran and the union's political advisor James McGowan.

investment in Welsh rail infrastructure although he chided Network Rail's 'lack of prioritisation in Cymru.' The

delegation also held a number of meetings with MPs, AMs, officials and other trade unionists.

... and meets with Welsh First Minister Rhodri Morgan

ASLEF recently met with Rhodri Morgan, First Minister of Wales to discuss the 'One Wales Agreement', a joint policy statement between the ruling Labour and Plaid Cymru coalition in the Welsh Assembly.

District Organiser Stan Moran welcomed the Welsh Labour Party's commitment to the country's railways and the programme for improved North-South links. He highlighted the need for greater levels of

investment on the London Swansea line drawing particular attention to the 'scandalously slow' speed restriction of 15mph at which trains are required to enter and leave Cardiff Station (trains should be able to enter the station at speeds of up to 60mph).

Morgan thanked Stan for his comments commenting that 'we live in the age of the train' and pointed to the Ebbw Vale line which was reopened in February. He hailed the

capacity enhancements Network Rail's £400 million investment in signalling between Port Talbot and Newport had brought - although he regretted that this represented the bulk of the operator's planned spending in Wales and suggested 'it wasn't a big investment' in comparison to other NR infrastructure projects. The First Minister expressed concern about the speed restrictions in Cardiff station which Stan explained

were as a result of 'rickety track.'

The union also raised a wide range of additional issues with the First Minister including regional pay which he called 'a mugs game' and the question of the Welsh Constitutional Convention which Morgan described as 'the best insurance policy against the return of a Tory Government.'

● **Look out for a special Welsh themed issue of the Journal next month.**

COMPETITION – A 102-YEAR-OLD LESSON

Privatisation of the railways was justified by John Major's Tory government on the basis that it would introduce competition, and competition is inherently 'a good thing'. Sadly, Labour has continued to endorse this philosophy over the past decade. If anyone had any concept of rail history they would have recognised that competition is seldom of benefit to anyone – especially passengers. Public services have different standards and aims from capitalist organisations. For example, safety is more important than making money for shareholders. If anyone needed evidence of this, they need have looked no further than the events at Salisbury on 30 June 1906 ...



BEFORE rail was nationalised, it was common to have different railway companies running trains along the same track, competing with each other for customers. This was certainly the case on the line between the south coast and London.

At that time there was great rivalry between the Great Western (GWR) and the London & South Western (L&SWR) companies. Both were anxious to secure a reputation for offering passengers the quickest boat train service – and the journey from Plymouth to London was seen as the 'jewel in the crown'.

Plymouth used to be the first stopping place for passenger liners arriving in mainland Britain from America. If travellers took the train, they could be in the capital before their boat docked at Southampton. At Plymouth the choice was between taking a route along the South Devon Lines to Exeter, then passing through Bristol to join Brunel's Great Western Railway line to Paddington (the GWR way) - or running on the L&SWR's own track to Exeter, going through Salisbury to Basingstoke and eventually linking up with its London to Southampton mainline which terminated at Waterloo.

The locos were state-of-the-art. The GWR's 'City of Truro' had, in 1904, become the first steam engine in the world to achieve 100 mph.

SPEED MATTERED TO MANAGERS

The two companies, competing for traffic, were anxious to show that they could cover the route in the fastest time. Effectively the lines came to resemble a race rather than a railway. There is no question that drivers were encouraged to exceed safety limits on the curves. At the very least, management was

happy to turn a blind eye. One manager, a Mr Churchward, who was the GWR superintendent, is known to have told footplate men, 'Withhold any attempt at a maximum speed until I give you the word. Then you can go and break your bloody neck!'

It was also true that although drivers would all have been familiar with the routes, they were not always experienced in operating these boat-trains. This was because crews often had to be called in at short notice to make sure a train was ready when the boats arrived.

DISASTER STRIKES SALISBURY

The SS United States arrived at Plymouth late on the evening of 29 June 1906 and 43 passengers – mainly Americans travelling first-class - transferred to the L&SWR train for London. The train departed shortly before midnight, pulling five sleeping-cars. The train crew consisted of a driver, fireman, guard, ticket-collector and two waiters.

The mainline engine was attached at Devonport Junction and ran to Templecombe. Here a L12 class locomotive (No 421) was to complete the journey to Waterloo.

Although the footplate men knew the route well, they had never worked a train that didn't stop at Salisbury. According to signal box logs, they approached at about 70 mph and hurtled through the station at about 60 mph. It was now about 2.40 am.

As it sped through the goods yard, the train needed to negotiate a scissors junction on a steep left curve. Officially the limit was 30 mph, but the driver would have wanted as much momentum as possible for the incline ahead. Its speed caused the train to tilt – and it struck a milk train on a different track. The



result was disastrous: the carriages simply disintegrated.

In the wreckage lay the bodies of 24 of the 43 passengers, the driver and fireman of the loco and the milk train's fireman and guard.

ORDERS FROM THE TOP?

Because of the deaths of the footplate men, we will never know the degree of responsibility that L&SWR management had for this incident. The subsequent Inquiry, headed up by a Major Pringle, made no effort to investigate this. It is generally accepted that the companies sanctioned drivers taking risks, but it will remain unclear how much pressure they were under.

But for us all, there is a century old lesson about the 'benefits' of competition ...

● Sincere thanks to Brother D. Smith of Salisbury

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FREE LEGAL ADVICE ASLEF also provides first class free legal advice – both for members and for their dependents. In the first six months of this year we have secured £1,442,369 in compensation claims! Call the helpline on 0808 100 8009

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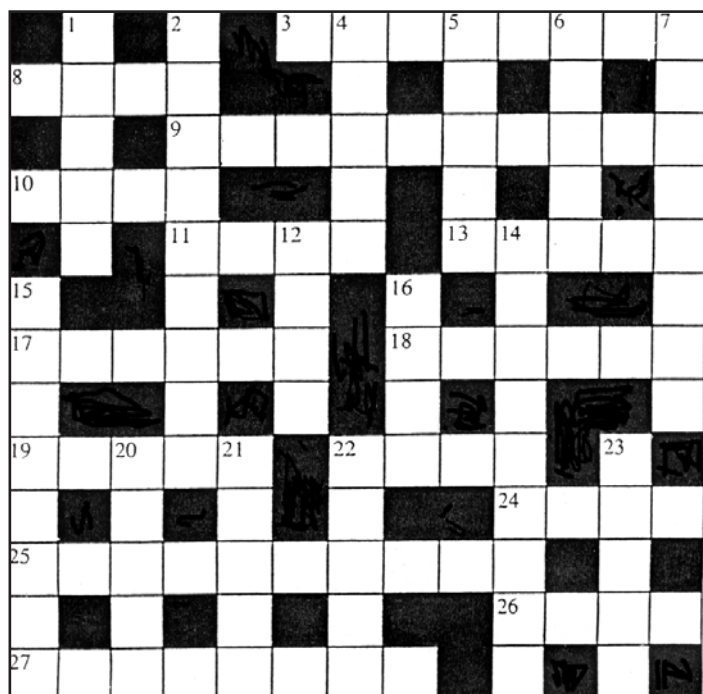
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ASLEF more than just a union



Prize Crossword No. 27

set by TLC



Solution to Crossword No 26 which appeared in the June edition of the ASLEF Journal. Congratulations to **Guntis Furmanis** from **Bishop's Stortford**.

ACROSS 3 Platform 8 Fuel 9 Embankment 10 Eric 11 Teen 13 Stair 17 Oblong 18 Agatha 19 Mates 22 Shin 24 Frog 25 Terracotta 26 Rail 27 Reserved **DOWN** 1 Guard 2 Electrode 4 Learn 5 Tykes 6 Opera 7 Material 12 Eggs 14 Train Fare 15 Commuter 16 Cash 20 Tyres 21 Starr 22 Scone 23 Bogie

Thanks for all your responses to the 26th ASLEF crossword in the June edition. If you complete this month's crossword please send the solution to the Editor, ASLEF Journal, 9 Arkwright Road, London NW3 6AB by the 14th of the issue month.

CLUES ACROSS

- 3 Maximum velocity! (3,5)
8 ---- Boardman, comedian (4)
9 Carried by the Railway Guard (6,4)
10 Bill of fare (4)
11 Get a lift, don't walk (4)
13 Discourage (5)
17 Road, often tree-lined (6)
18 Repeat the performance (6)
19 Replaced by the Council Tax (5)
22 Aquatic mammal (4)
24 Type of bomb (4)
25 Warning signal (5,5)
26 Not shut (4)
27 Lifted up (8)

CLUES DOWN

- 1 Metal (5)
2 Protection against accidents, burglaries etc. (9)
4 Pre-metric weight (5)
5 Meal of lettuce, tomatoes etc. (5)
6 Precise (5)
7 Left the station (8)
12 Not shallow water (4)
14 Automatic stairs (9)
15 Where passengers sit (8)
16 Garden party (4)
20 Food is placed on this (5)
21 Middle-eastern country (5)
22 Climb over it (5)
23 Used to cut the grass (5)



The winner of this month's crossword will receive Marks & Spencer vouchers to the value of £25

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